INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper discussed how innovation and transformation in conflict resolution in Nigeria will enhance sustainable development using secondary data. It also reviewed theories and models in conflict resolution, the African methods of conflict resolution, Grassroots community-based activities, good governance, communication, collaboration, negotiation, conciliation, mediation and crisis management as methods of conflict resolution that require innovation and transformation in conflict resolution. The paper concluded that it is important that innovation and transformation in communication, collaboration, dialogue, conciliation, mediation and proper crisis management are equally needed to resolve conflict in other to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria. Recommendations that the government should be actively involved in transforming peacemaking through formal processes and institutions of government such as policy making and peace building activities, among others which prevent conflict.

KEYWORDS: Transformation, Innovation, Conflict Resolution, Good Governance and Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

The frequency of conflicts leading to violence and extensive destruction of lives and property, especially since the early 1980s in many parts of the country calls for innovation and transformation in conflict resolution in Nigeria for sustainable development. Innovation and transformation in conflict resolution can only come in practice if included in the cultural values of settling dispute in the society. It must be changing with the system for it to meet the functional needs for peace in the society. Violence is generally frowned at by all communities. In all civilized societies of the world, there is growing concern to the peaceful settlement of disputes. There is a preference for the peaceful settlement of disputes along the lines prescribed by the institutions and values of the community. There is a great amount of peaceful and non-violent settlement of disputes taking place at various levels and in many communities all over the world, most of which do not catch the attention of the media. Non- violent methods of conflict management are available at the individual, family, group, community national and international levels.

This study reviews innovation and transformation in conflict resolution for sustainable Development in Nigeria. In the past violence, aggression and confrontation are strategies used for conflict resolution (Hicks, 2011). There are innovation and transformation through peaceful methods in two broad categories. The first is the pro-active category, which entails methods that aim to prevent the occurrence of conflict in the first place. These can be seen in some

undocumented community-based trust and confidence building measures, communication, good governance, inter-party collaboration, etc. The second Category is reactive, this deals with the way responses are given to situations that have kicked off conflict. These could involve third party interventions like mediation, brokerage, conciliation, arbitration and litigation, etc.

Theories and Models of Conflict Resolution

Dual concern model of conflict resolution: this model of conflict resolution is a conceptual perspective that assumes individuals preferred methods of dealing with conflict is based on the two underlying dimensions; **1.** A concern for self (assertiveness) and **2.** A concern for others (empathy).

From the model, group members balance their concern for satisfying personal needs and interests with their concern for satisfying the needs and interest of others in different ways. The intersection point between these two dimensions ultimately lead individuals towards exhibiting different styles of conflict resolution. The dual model identifies five conflict resolution styles that individuals may use depending on their dispositions towards pro-self or pro- social goals.

- **Avoidance Conflict Style:** This is noted by inaction and passivity, avoidance conflict style is typically used when an individual has reduced concern for their own outcomes as well as the outcomes of others. Wilmot and Jouce (2007) opined that during conflict, these avoiders adopt a "wait and see attitude'', often allowing conflict to phase out on its own without any personal involvement which could make problems to escalate.

- **Yielding Conflict Style:** Yielding or accommodating conflict styles are seen as a high concern for others while having a low concern for one's own self. This passive pro-social approach emerges when individuals drive personal satisfaction from meeting the needs of others and have a general concern for maintaining stable, positive social relationship.

- **Competitive Conflict Style:** Competitive or "fighting"; conflict styles maximize individual assertiveness and minimize empathy. Groups consisting of competitive members generally enjoy seeking domination over others, and typically see conflict as a 'win or lose" predicament; which is not to be so.

- **Cooperative Conflict Style:** This is characterized by an active concern for both pro-social and pro-self behavior. Cooperation conflict style is used when an individual has elevated interests in their own outcomes as well as in the outcomes of the others. During conflict cooperators collaborate with others in an effort to find an amicable solution that satisfies all parties involved in the conflict. Some individuals with this type of conflict style tend to be highly assertive and highly empathetic at the same time. In seeing conflict as an opportunity, collaborators willingly invest time and resources into finding a "win-win" situation.

- **Conciliation Conflict Styles:** Conciliation or compromising conflict style is typical of individuals who possess an immediate level of concern for both personal and others outcomes. Compromiser's value fairness and in doing so anticipate mutual give and take interactions. In accepting some demands put forth by others, compromisers believe this agreeableness will encourage others to meet half way, thus promoting conflict resolution (Hicks, 2011).

Conflict Resolution

This is seen by Miller (2003), as a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive

solving of problems, distinct from management or transformation of conflict. Hence, indicating that by conflict resolution, it is expected that the deep rooted sources of conflict are addressed and resolved, and behavior is no longer violent, nor are attitudes hostile any longer, while the structure of the conflict has been changed. it is seen from studies that a conflict is resolved when the basic needs of parties have been met with necessary satisfiers, and their fears have been allayed (Shedrack, 2012). It is also noted that those over values, may be non-resolvable and can at best be transformed, regulated or /and managed.

Bannon and Paul (2003) are of the view that the term conflict resolution may also be used interchangeably with dispute resolution, where arbitration and litigation process are critically involved. Moreover, the concept of conflict resolution can be thought to encompass the use of non violent resistance measures by conflicted parties an attempt to promote effective resolution.

Conflict Transformation

This has been introduced by Lederach (1995) of the Eastern Mennonite School of Peace building. It is noted that it goes beyond conflict resolution to build longer standing relationships through a process of change in perceptions and attitudes of parties. The aim of conflict transformation is to change the parties, their relationships and the conflict transformation entails the coming into being of new situations involving conflict issues, perceptions, relationships and communication patterns (Ike, 2012). Conflict transformation can be seen as change. It can be seen descriptively in the changes created by social conflict, and prescriptively in the deliberate intervention by third parties to create change.

Conflict transformation takes place at different levels and has a number of dimensions. At the personal level, it involves emotional, perceptual and spiritual aspects of change desired for the individual. It also affects relationships based on communication between parties that needs to change to positively affect poorly functioning communication. Change equally needs to affect structures that generate conflict through deprivation, exclusion and other forms of injustice. Therefore, seeks to understand cultural patterns and values of parties. Generally, the idea of conflict transformation stems from the recognition of the dialectical element of conflict about the inevitability of change.

Hence, it recognizes the neutrality of conflict as such, and that conflict can be either negative or positive, but parties can transform it into positive to maximize opportunities.

African Traditional Dispute Resolution

There are many cultural and religious practices in Africa. This diversity affects the approaches to dispute and conflict resolution in the traditional setting. The approach would tend to differ from the Western alternative dispute resolution in several respects. Within Africa, the approach may equally differ from one culture to another. The religious practices also affect the culture of the people. This will determine the method conflicts are resolved in that society. There are variations in conflicts involving property, land, family, marriage, communities, as well as those between Muslim parties on the one hand, and the Muslim and non-Muslim parties on the other hand (Ike, 2012). In some African societies, the universal religions have nearly completely displaced the traditional methods of dispute resolution. In some places, the values of Islam and Christianity have affected parts of the tradition; redefined and reshaped others and left some intact.

There are two levels of social formation in Africa. The first are noted by centralized authority and state system, being headed by kings and chiefs, most of them are dated some centuries back before the colonial rule in Africa. This type can be seen in the emirates of Northern Nigeria, the ancient Yoruba Kingdoms, the ancient Ashanti kingdom of Ghana,

the ancient Benin kingdom of Nigeria, the kingdoms of East, Central and South Africa, etc. There are some traditional leaders known as chiefs or by other names, and sub-chiefs. In the first level, traditional political leader, the dispute resolution system is rigid. It takes the form of judicial arbitration. There is little negotiation and mediation as understood in the Western sense. Typical examples are to be found in the Igbo and Tiv societies of Nigeria. Hence, there is the absence of a centralized authority, and decisions are taken at family, clan and age grade levels. Councils of elders usually made up of senior members of the community also exist to decide individual and community disputes. Here, dispute resolution is informal, with an air of democratization in the process and outcome. The community feels and owns the process. Dispute resolution is seen as a system of justice, to which the community, rather than individual leaders, is at the center (Wilmot & Jouce, 2007).

The second level of state system in pre-colonial Africa may be classified as the segmented system, otherwise called the "egalitarian" political system. Here, the setting for dispute resolutions in the segmented system would normally be a neutral ground such as the village square, or an open hut. Where boundary dispute between individuals, families, clans or villages is the case, the boundary in contention could be the venue of the meeting. In some cases, there could be deep spiritual dimensions, and the need to invoke ancestral spirits to buttress the links Africans maintain with their ancestors. The venue for the resolution of conflicts could equally be village or community adjudication centers such as the village square, market square etc. Those that have religious and spiritual dimensions, and convention may be conducted at a which require ancestral intervention may be conducted at a traditional community is being placed and considered above any other individual or social unit. It is noted that African ADR attaches more importance to community interests than individual needs and interest.

Gender; typically, women are kept out of African shrine. Normally the participants in African ADR would be males, but depending on the sensitivities and peculiarities of each community, be adult males. Decisions taken are meant to include and affect women and children also. In most cases, the best awards and decisions favor adult males.

Process; the African ADR process would normally begin with general preparation. This involves consultations, invitations sent to the appropriate persons, the gathering of materials for rituals such as sacrificial animals, local brew for libation and for others to consume thereafter, selection of a date that does not clash with events like market days or farming, etc. The assemblage of the right caliber of participants is followed by a call for silence by a town crier or the elderly member of the community. Silence is seen as sanctity and dignity of the people, the community, leadership and the process itself. After this they pray and ask their ancestors to support the innocents and send punishment on the offenders. Christianity, Islam and modernization are beginning to affect these processes, and it is typical now to have either Christian or Muslim prayers, or both, said at the beginning of such sessions. In the Igbo setting in Nigeria, the breaking of kola, among other rites, conducted by the very senior male members of the community, symbolizes the commencement of such event.

There are wise sayings from the elderly person. Disputants may thereafter swear to oaths and state their cases, to the hearing of the elders. Other members of the community present also listen to the stating of the cases by disputants. At the end of the listening, the elders have the duty to give their verdict. They sometimes receive input from other members of the community present. The focus is to pass a verdict that promotes community solidarity, but with emphasis on non-violence. At the end of the process, there could be other activities that follow. If the event is at a shrine, the sacrificial lamb or chicken will either be cooked or roasted, and eaten by the most senior men. Equally the men will drink the wine or

local alcohol that accompanies the process and such drink will be brewed by women. The peace issue is hence assumed to be completed and sealed.

It is worthy of note that it is not in all cases that guilt must be established. In certain family disputes, third party interveners anxious to find solutions to a situation may be required to look for solutions without blaming either party. The aims will be to reconcile parties having swept most of the issues in the conflict under the carpet (Uwazie, 2000).

Openness: The African ADR is conducted in the open also, as a means of ensuring that subsequent generations in the community learn the process and value systems of ADR. It is then a socialization process for the younger generations. This is why younger persons do more of listening and observing of the seniors than participate or contribute.

Hence, ADR is focused on the community rather than individual disputants, employing spiritual and community powers and traditions, gender specific orientation, elders playing a critical role, and a verdict passed on who is wrong and who being right is that of the deciding authority and not reached by parties themselves.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION METHODS

Innovation and transformation in conflict resolution in Nigeria is very paramount for sustainable development. These are to be applied in some areas such as in Grassroots community-based activities, good governance, Communication, collaboration, Negotiation, conciliation, mediation and Crisis management

Grassroots Community-Based Activities: The community long held traditions and cultures which are rich, promote human spirit and community life are to be encouraged to enhance the resolution of conflicts in the society. For example, village festivals like the new yam festivals among the Igbos of Nigeria, initiation rites and puberty festivities for young people, marriage ceremonies, the sharing of village and community markets, weddings, death and the accompanying mourning rites, are all community-based. None of these are done by individuals alone but these involve the entire community. These activities create social bonding that could be used to resolve conflicts in the society. These should be seen as an avenue for people to see themselves as one entity that should not remain in conflict (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009).

Good Governance: Good governance may be seen as the running of the affairs of government in positive and progressive manners beneficial to the governed, and which delivers the public goods. It is characterized by democratization, maintenance of law and order, accountability and transparency, responsiveness on the part of government, due process, rule of law, competence, separation and devolution of powers, a free press and a free virile civil society, competition for power and the existence of a credible opposition, the respect for minority rights among other human rights. Good governance enhances good human relationships and gains the support of the citizenry, which will reduce the reduce conflict generation in the society. Since wrong decisions by the government escalates conflict in the society.

Communication: This is the process of sharing and exchanging information between individuals, groups and potential parties in a conflict situation. It is a process of interacting and relating with others, meaning that parties to a conflict situation still talk. This process can enhance conflict resolution since both parties will bring out their grievances in order to find out the root causes of the conflict. It is only when the root causes of such conflicts are resolved that the conflict resolution will be sustained for peace to rain. Innovation and transformation through communication in conflict resolution will enhance conflict prevention and crises management from the fact that most conflicts have to do with

perceptions, assumptions, stereotypes, and attitudes, which have been developed by conflict parties' vis-à-vis others.

Collaboration: Innovation and transformation in collaboration process which is one in which parties work together on their own, to resolve problems through constructive dialogue or other activities like joint projects, sharing of community schools and health centers, markets, bridges and culverts, as well as other utilities. Hence, collaboration helps to build trust, confidence and mutual respect. It works on the basis of conflict parties, either potential or actual, working together on a number of identified common themes and issues, or projects, which intensify communication and activities between them. This is to achieve lasting peace since those who do things together, are likely to build more friendship and mutual respect among themselves than those who do not.

Negotiation: This is seen as a structural process of dialogue between conflicting parties about issues in which their opinions differ. The University for Peace sees negotiation as: communication, usually governed by pre- established procedures, between representatives of parties involved in a conflict or disputes (Miller, 2003). Hence, negotiation is a direct process of dialogue and discussion taking place between at least two parties who are faced with a conflict situation or a dispute. It is important to note that both parties come to the realization that they have a problem, and both are aware that by talking to each other, they can find a lasting solution to the problem. Through innovation and transformation conflict resolution should be encouraged through negotiation to reach agreement through joint decision making between parties. Negotiation seems to have universal application as a principle of conflict management based on dialogue. People in all societies and cultures across the world talk and negotiate their interests.

Conciliation: Conciliation covers intermediary efforts aimed at persuading the parties to a conflict to work towards a peaceful solution. It involves facilitation. According to Miller (2003), conciliation is seen as the voluntary referral of a conflict to a neutral external party which either suggests a non- binding settlement or conducts explorations to facilitate more structures or techniques of conflict resolution. This can involve confidential discussions with the disputants or assistance during a pre-negotiation phase. Hence through innovation and transformation conciliation can enhance conflict resolution since it reduces tensions between parties and in conflict situation.

Mediation: Miller (2002), sees mediation as the involuntary, informal, non-binding process undertaken by an external party that fosters the settlement of differences or demands between directly invested parties. Therefore, mediation is the intervention of a third party; it is a voluntary process in which the parties retain control over the outcome, although it may include positive and negative inducements. The role of the mediator is to create the enabling environment for the parties to carry out dialogue sessions leading to the resolution of a pending conflict. Innovation and transformation through mediation could enhance conflict resolution since it is quite productive and helpful in settling conflicts that would have otherwise escalated easily.

Crisis Management: A crisis is an extreme situation sparked from conflict, where critical decisions have to be taken or else the conflict escalates to extreme violence which could claim lives and property. A crisis is a threat to human security, intense violence characterized by fighting, death, injury, large-scale displacement of populations, etc. Once a crisis occurs, it is the responsibility of the government of a state to de-escalate the situation and bring a cessation to violence. This is because communication is threatened, and often disrupted. It is only until communication is restored through normalcy, that parties may resume their normal activities. The introduction of the police and other law enforcement authorities may call for the use of extraordinary measures, including force, to restore law and order. This could further lead to human rights violations of various descriptions. Through innovation and transformation in

conflict resolution crisis should be not be allowed since it destroys lives and property which is anti-development. In a society, where there is peace, there is always long life, happiness, love, affection, joy, feeling for others and development.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development is a pattern of resources use that aims at meeting human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present but in the indefinite future. The field of sustainable development can be conceptually broken into three constituent parts namely: environmental sustainability, economic and socio-political sustainability. Sustainable development is all about equity, defined as equality of opportunities for well-being, as well as about comprehensiveness of objectives. It aims at preserving the environment for the future generation, without denying the present generation and preserving the environment and saving the mother Earth (Soubbotina, 2004).

Sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of technological development and societal change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future means to meet human needs and aspiration. It is not about the society reaching an end state nor is it about establishing static structures or about identifying fixed qualities of life. It is about promoting equitable and balanced development (Baker, 2006). Hence, conflict resolution will encourage peace which promotes development of any society.

CONCLUSIONS

Conflict can only be seen when the government is not taking the interest of the public at heart. In Nigeria, it is seen that good governance will enhance conflict prevention, which is identified as the best way of conflict resolution. It is also important that innovation and transformation in communication, collaboration, dialogue, conciliation, mediation and proper crisis management are equally needed to resolve conflict in other to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government should be actively involved in transforming peacemaking through formal processes and institutions of government such as policy making and peace building activities.

- Provision of public goods is necessary in Nigeria to reduce incidence of conflict.

- Professional or Peacemaking through Conflict Resolution should be enhanced in Nigeria, by analysis, prevention, and resolution and conflict management.

- Research, training, and education, or Peacemaking through learning should be encouraged for all through innovation and transformation.

- Innovation in Peacemaking through Advocacy in the media, schools and public gathering should be enhanced and encouraged by the community leaders.

- Business or Peacemaking through innovation in Commerce should be encouraged by the government, since it provides economic and commercial opportunities which prevent conflict.

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